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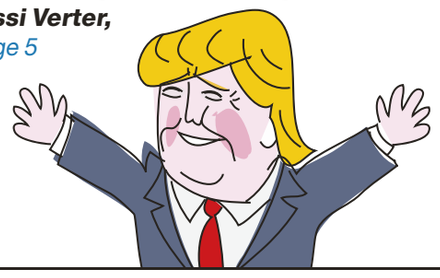

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Aluf Benn

Palestinians clash with IDF after Trump's decision on Jerusalem

Jack Khoury and Reuters

At least 19 Palestinians were wounded Thursday in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza during clashes with Israeli soldiers following U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the Red Crescent said.

Seven Palestinians were wounded at demonstrations near the West Bank city of Ramallah. Four were said to have been wounded by live fire and two by rubber bullets.

Eight were wounded by rubber bullets in Tul Karm, and three in Bethlehem. Four Palestinians were wounded by rubber bullets in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Shoafat. Confrontations were also reported in Nablus and Jenin.

A military spokeswoman said soldiers had used riot-dispersal gear against hundreds of stone-throwers. Dozens of demonstrators were treated for the inhalation of tear gas.

In the Gaza Strip, three Palestinian protesters were wounded by live fire east of Khan Yunis, the Palestinian Health Ministry said.

Demonstrations in Ramallah, Tul Karm and Nablus were attended by many hundreds of demonstrators, some of whom burned pictures of Trump. Dozens of Palestinians also protested in several locations throughout the north and center of Gaza.

In the West Bank cities of Hebron and Al-Bireh, thousands of demonstrators rallied with chants of "Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Palestine," witnesses said. Some Palestinians threw stones at soldiers.

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Rockets fired from Gaza

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Israeli forces watching as Palestinian protesters throw stones near a checkpoint in Bethlehem on Thursday. *Thomas Coex/AFP*

Crushing Palestinian nationalism

Benjamin Netanyahu's critics like to say he has no strategy and no policy other than his political survival. But they're wrong. The prime minister has a clear goal that he has pursued for many years now: dismantling the Palestinian national movement.

Netanyahu sees this movement as an uncompromising enemy of Zionism, and he sees the relationship between the two national movements as a zero-sum game. When one gains, the other loses.

On Wednesday, Netanyahu racked up an important victory in his battle against the Palestinians, with President Donald Trump's announcement that the United States recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital and will begin preparations for moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to the holy city.

Trump didn't give the Palestinians anything in return, and even weakened America's commitment to the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state. His speech sounded as if it could have been written by Netanyahu and his ambassador in Washington, Ron Dermer, and it presumably was closely coordinated with them.

Netanyahu is a man of ideas and symbols far more than decisions and actions. In his view, it's much more important to have Jerusalem recognized as Israel's capital than to build thousands of additional homes in the settlements.

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UN Security Council to hold special session on U.S. recognition of J'lem

Noa Landau

International pushback against America's unilateral recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital is gathering steam, especially in Western European countries.

The UN Security Council will hold a special meeting on the issue at 6 P.M. Israel time on Friday, at the request of eight member states: Britain, France, Egypt, Italy, Sweden, Uruguay, Bolivia and Senegal. Russia is also expected to denounce U.S. President Donald Trump's decision.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke with Trump three times before the president's announcement on Jerusalem. In those conversations, he stressed the decision's historic importance and promised explicitly that the status quo in the city would be maintained.

The Israeli and American UN delegations are working together to thwart any significant statement or decision by the Security Council. They are hoping that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who has been asked to brief the council, will refuse to come, thereby lowering the flames.

Another factor likely to influence the council's discussion is whether Friday prayers at the mosques pass quietly or lead to violent protests. Israeli Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon is expected to stress in his speech that Israel will maintain the status quo and freedom of worship for all faiths in Jerusalem.

Last December, the UN Security Council passed a resolution stating that it "will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations." The resolution, which infuriated Jerusalem, passed by a vote of 14-0, with America, then under President Barack Obama, abstaining. The Israeli delegation expects opponents of Trump's decision to raise that resolution on Friday, along with Resolution 478 from 1980, which said the council wouldn't recognize Israel's unilateral annexation of East Jerusalem and urged all countries not to station their embassies in Jerusalem.

On Wednesday, in response to Trump's announcement, Guterres said: "From day one as secretary-general of the United Nations, I have consistently spoken out against any unilateral measures that would jeopardize the prospect of peace for Israelis and Palestinians ... In this moment of great anxiety, I want to

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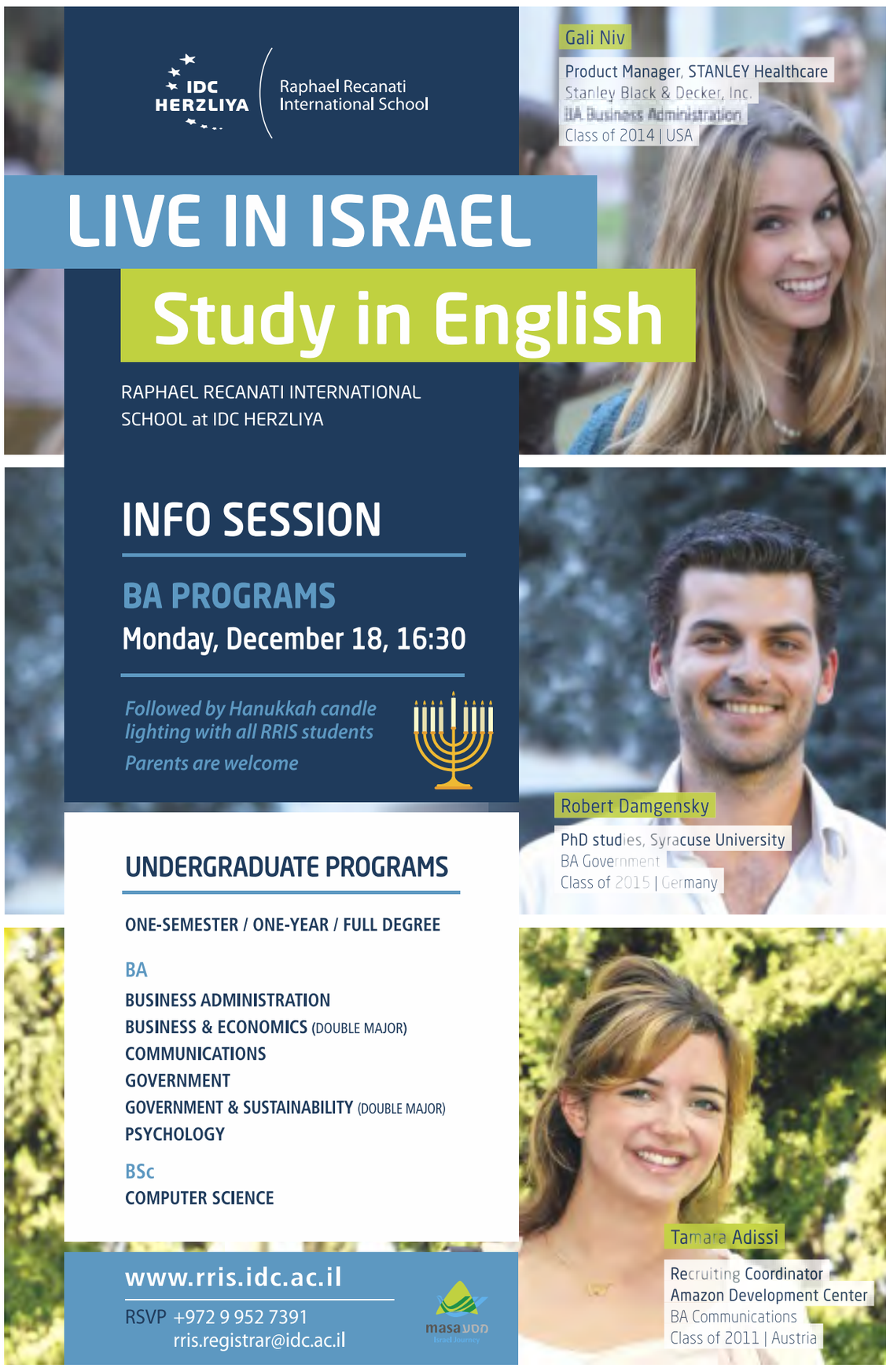
Trump's declaration may give Abbas a chance to shake things up

Jordan's King Abdullah II, left, welcoming Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Amman on Thursday. *Khalil Mazraawi/AFP*

Amira Hass

The American recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital is an opportunity for the Palestinian leadership to cast off old and fossilized modes of thinking and action that have rendered these leaders incapable of change. Will this opportunity be used to undertake an internal process of democratization, first of all to restore relations between an unelected Palestinian elite that has been in power for several decades and the public (not only in the West Bank and in Gaza but in the Palestinian diaspora as well)? The hope is that it will be used to effect change. The concern is that it won't happen.

When the Palestinian leadership recovers from the shock delivered by the symbolic change in American policy — symbolic, but with explosive potential — it will say that this is a pan-Muslim, a pan-Arab or perhaps a European problem. The leadership would be correct in saying so, of course. The leaders will say that Palestinians are the weakest link in the chain and that they can't deal with the pyromaniac in the White House on their own.

It might also put another way. The change in the American position enables Palestinian leaders, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, to effect change that will show their people that they haven't embraced the diplomatic course that depends on economic and security coordination with Israel only to further their own immediate personal and financial interests — and those of entourages close to Fatah and Palestine Liberation Organization leadership. "Personal advancement" has been one of the prevalent explanations for the fact that Abbas has stubbornly evaded the holding of elections, and that, within his Fatah faction, elections have been fixed and dictated from above to an extent that is not openly discussed. For the same

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